

Organizational Changes, Workplace Bullying and Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

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Abstract: The aims of this paper are to analyse the impact of organizational changes in the occurrence of workplace bullying and also to study the role played by organizational citizenship behaviour in this process. Reorganizations may cause bullying and aggressive behaviours directly or may interfere with other variables in the emergence of bullying. Organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB) are those employee activities that are “discretionary”, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal rewards system, but that in the aggregate promote the effective functioning of the organization (Organ, 1988). Researchers have traditionally viewed citizenship as prosocial (Idem), but there is no reason to assume that such behaviour is entirely selfless (Bolino, 1999). One implication of this argument is that employees can proactively manage their risk of being victimized in workplace bullying situations by being good citizens.

Keywords: workplace bullying, organizational changes, restructuring & downsizing, organizational citizenship behaviour.

Mudanças Organizacionais, Assédio Moral no Trabalho e Comportamentos de Cidadania Organizacional

Resumo: Os objetivos deste artigo são analisar o impacto das mudanças organizacionais na ocorrência de assédio moral no trabalho e estudar o papel desempenhado pelos comportamentos de cidadania organizacional no processo. As reorganizações podem causar assédio moral e comportamentos agressivos diretamente ou podem interferir com outras variáveis na emergência de assédio moral no trabalho. Os comportamentos de cidadania organizacional (OCB) são comportamentos “discricionários”, não reconhecidos explicitamente pelo sistema de recompensas formal mas que de forma agregada promovem o funcionamento eficiente das organizações (Organ, 1988). Os investigadores tradicionalmente encararam os comportamentos de cidadania como pro-sociais (Idem), mas não há razões para acreditar que estes comportamentos são completamente desinteressados (Bolino, 1999). Uma implicação deste argumento é que os empregados(as) podem gerir proactivamente o risco de serem vitimados(as) em situações de assédio moral ao serem bons cidadãos(ãs).

Palavras-Chave: assédio moral, mudanças organizacionais, reestruturações e “downsizings”, comportamentos de cidadania organizacional.

1. Introduction

The concept of workplace bullying as an organizational phenomenon was first introduced by Leymann in Sweden in the mid of 80's, having carried the first nation-wide survey in the beginning of 90s (Leymann, 1990b), which showed a prevalence of 3,5% of bullying behaviours in the general working population. Currently, and according to the Fifth European Working Conditions Survey, the level of incidence of workplace bullying in Europe is 4,1%, despite wide variations between countries emerge from the data; in Portugal the prevalence of workplace bullying is 4,4%, (Parent-Thirion et al, 2012). In terms of empirical research carried out in Portugal so far, despite scarce, there is already some data concerning incidence levels. Hence, Verdasca (2010), in a study realized in the banking sector (n=561), found an incidence level of 5,9%, according to a definition. Additionally, Araújo, McIntyre & McIntyre (2008), in a sample of 787 workers from services and manufacturing, found a rate of prevalence of 7,9%, using the same criteria. Lastly, Serra et al., (2005), in a sample of 622 workers from the postal services and the Coimbra's Hospital, found an incidence rate of 5,9% during the last twelve months.

The severe outcomes related to this phenomenon and inherent aggressive behaviours have attracted the international academic community and lead to a growing interest of researchers to study it in the UK (e.g. Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Randall, 1997; Rayner, 1997;2000), in Germany (Zapf, 1999;Niedl, 1996), in the Nordic countries (Leymann, 1996; Vartia, 1996; Einarsen, Raknes & Matthiesen, 1994a) and also in other countries and continents (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Baron & Neuman, 1996;1998). Studies on the prevalence of workplace bullying have shown extensive consequences on several levels: on the individual level several studies revealed dramatic consequences on victims, ranging from musculoskeletal complains to anxiety, insomnia and depression (Hogh, Mikkelsen & Hasen, 2011); on the organizational level there are several costs like absenteeism, turnover and replacement, loss of motivation and productivity, amongst others (Hoel, Sheehan, Cooper & Einarsen, 2011). Some researchers have even tried to get a clearer picture of this problem by calculating the costs associated with the occurrence of bullying (Hoel & Cooper, 2000; Giga, Hoel & Lewis, 2008). Hence, in a report commissioned by the Dignity at Work Partnership to Giga, Hoel & Lewis (2008) , costs of violence/stress at work are discussed and broadly assessed, not only on the individual level (e.g. mental, psychological and economic) but also for the organizations (e.g. sickness absence, high staff turnover, productivity lost, legal expenses).

In order to better understand and increase our knowledge of this organizational issue, we will briefly set forth the main factors that have been associated with its occurrence so far. As such, whereas some authors have emphasised the role of personality traits of perpetrators and victims as key factors for the occurrence of bullying (Coyne et al., 2000; Aquino, Grover, Bradfield & Allen, 1999), others have brought into focus the role played by deficiencies in the work environment (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Leymann, 1996; Vartia, 1996: 2003; Zapf, Knorz & Kulla, 1996; Salin, 2003b; Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen, 2007) and have found that the "quality" or styles of leadership, low work control and autonomy, role conflict, time pressures, role ambiguity, strained and hectic atmosphere, reliance on performance-appraisal reward systems and low satisfaction with the social and communication climate strongly influences the occurrence of workplace bullying; other researchers have pointed to the relationship between aggressive behaviours and organizational changes, such as restructuring, pressures for efficiency, increased

competition, downsizing and changes in management, cost cutting and pay freezes (Baron & Neuman, 1996; 1998; McCarthy, 1996; Sheehan, 1996). Hence, several trends in the whole society, such as globalization and liberalization of markets, work intensification, technological innovations and major shifts in workforce demographics have all contributed to a “leaner and meaner” work environment, with organizations going on crash diets to reduce in size and improve on effectiveness and efficiency (Doherty, 1996). Pressures generated by these forces may lower the threshold at which managers may resort to bullying behaviours in order “to get the job done” (McCarthy, 1996) and, as such, have been hypothesized to have an effect on the prevalence of workplace bullying (Neuman & Baron, 2003; Salin, 2003a).

In this paper, based on findings from previous studies, we want to examine the impact of a variable drawn from the above mentioned organizational factors (restructuring & downsizing) on workplace bullying and, as a new variable, we will add organizational citizenship behaviours. The argument is that organizational changes often have a detrimental impact on employee’s attitudes and behaviours and may cause bullying. Additionally we choose to study the role played by organizational citizenship behaviours in the process because there are no studies to date focusing on the consequences of such behaviours on the emergence of workplace bullying. However, Aquino & Bommer (2003) found that interpersonally directed citizenship behaviours were negatively related to victimization. Thus, drawing on these findings we want to extend their analysis to workplace bullying.

2. A conceptual model of Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying has been constructed as a dynamic process or a escalated conflict involving interaction between two parties (victim and perpetrator), in which the victim is not a mere passive recipient of bullying acts but rather an active agent which can influence the process through the way he/she reacts to the bullying behaviours (Einarsen et al., 2003; Salin, 2003a). According to the literature on interactionism, which suggests that no individual or situational / contextual factors alone are generally sufficient to sustain ongoing organizational behaviour (Chatman, 1989), both action and reaction should be understood within the organizational context in which they take place. The interpretation of behaviours is contextualized by the prevailing norms and expectations inherent in the social situation, therefore the setting in which the behaviour takes place has an explanatory role in understanding the way in which the behaviour is shaped and perceived (Felson & Tedeschi, 1993; Lawrence, 2001). Accordingly, the model we will present about workplace bullying maintains that certain individual predispositions interact with certain situational facilitators to foster bullying, revolving the individual predispositions largely around the personality of the victim and/or the perpetrator and the contextual factors were selected to span the macro and micro-levels that constitute an organization (House, Rosseau & Thomas-Hunt, 1995, cited in Ashforth, 1997). As macro-level factors we consider the recent socio-economic and work organization trends associated with markets globalization and the micro-level factors include work environment variables, namely social climate, political behaviours, work load and reward systems; finally, as individual factors we choose gender, organizational standing and organizational citizenship behaviour.

The phenomenon of “bullying at work” includes being subjected to persistent criticism, insults or offensive remarks (Einarsen et al., 1999) and has attracted a growing flow of research in the past 15 years. Typically, a victim is constantly teased, badgered and insulted, and perceives that he/she has scarce resources to retaliate in kind. Despite the controversies around the definitional issue (Einarsen, 2000), a commonly agreed upon definition is:

“Bullying at work means harassing, offending, socially excluding someone or negatively affecting someone’s work tasks. The negative behaviours associated with bullying have to occur repeatedly and regularly (e.g. weekly) and over a period of time (e.g. about six months). Bullying is an escalating process in the course of which the person confronted ends up in an inferior position and becomes the target of systematic negative social acts. A conflict cannot be called bullying if the incident is an isolated event or if two parties of approximately equal strength are in conflict” (Einarsen et al., 2003, p.15)

Workplace bullying encompasses a plethora of negative and aggressive behaviors, which may range from subtle, indirect acts of psychological aggression to open verbal or physical aggressive acts, such as “being shouted at”, “name calling” and “put down in front of others” (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003; Rayner, 1997).

2.1 Organizational Changes

Economic globalization has increased competition and, in order to survive, organizations have been restructuring and downsizing with the aim of cutting costs, putting greater pressures on everyone at work. Thus, the need for restructuring may encourage more authoritarian practices from managers and may also inflate tension and conflict amongst workers as a result of increasing pressure (Hoel & Salin, 2003). For the employee, reorganizations consist of changes in work tasks and responsibilities, changes in superiors and co-workers and changes in resources available (Burke & Nelson, 1998; McKinley & Sherer, 2000). Baron & Neuman (1996) explored the relationship between a wide range of organizational changes and aggression, being the strongest predictors of aggression, emerging from their study, “the use of part-time employees”, “changes in management”, “pay-cuts or pay-freezes”. In a further study these authors identified four categories of organizational changes associated with aggression: cost-cutting, organizational change, job (in)security and social change (Baron & Neuman, 1998). As far as a change in supervisor or management is concerned, it has been associated with bullying by Hoel & Cooper (2000) and also by Rayner (1997). These studies also identified a “recent change in job” and “a change in the way the organization operated” as antecedents of bullying. Additionally, Skogstad, Wold & Einarsen (2006) found a moderate to low correlation between three types of reorganizations (“Changes in working conditions”, “Cutbacks” and “Operational Changes”) and bullying, being “Changes in working conditions” the strongest predictor : higher degrees of change in reorganizations were associated with higher levels of bullying; quantitative and qualitative job insecurity, as well as tyrannical leadership and laissez-faire leadership mediated the relationship between cutbacks and workplace bullying, measured by the Negative Acts Questionnaire. Neuman & Baron (2003) concluded that injustice perceptions, frustration and stress blow to individual dignity and self-worth and may be conducive to aggression and bullying in work groups. Baillien et al., (2006) have identified role conflict and job insecurity as mediating

organizational change in the occurrence of workplace bullying, with no direct relationship between organizational changes and workplace bullying emerging from the data. Hence:

H1: In a work setting characterized by restructuring, changes in management, downsizings and other variables connected with economic globalization there is a increasing probability of bullying to occur

2.2 Individual factors

Individual factors have been largely associated with the occurrence of workplace bullying. As such, victims of bullying have been described as overachievers with an unrealistic view of their abilities and resources, conscientious, literal-minded, somewhat naïve (Brodsky, 1976), anxious in social settings and as having low self-esteem (Einarsen et al, 1994). On the other hand, bullies were seen as the product of complex social processes which created an antisocial personality characterized by the aggressive manipulation of other people (Randall, 1997); perpetrators have also been described as having an authoritarian or abrasive personality and acting as a petty tyrants (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Asforth, 1997).

Victim personality may be related to bullying in several ways. Personality traits may increase the likelihood of a person displaying behaviours that are socially provocative, leading in turn to interpersonal conflict that may escalate into bullying (Einarsen et al, 1994; Olweus, 1993) and may also play a role in people's perceptions of being a victim of bullying. Such traits may even act as a mediator or moderator factor in the relationships between bullying and stress reactions (Einarsen, 2000). Finally, victims may use strategic behaviours to defend themselves from interpersonal mistreatment. Examples may include tactical revenge, social accounts and apologies and also organizational citizenship behaviours (Aquino & Bommer, 2003). In this study, the behaviour we choose to examine is organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) .

Citizenship behaviour represents the willingness of individuals to invest effort and energy in their social environment beyond any formal requirements and with no expectations of formal rewards. Organ and his colleagues identified this contributing extra-role behaviour as the "good soldier syndrome" in the workplace (Organ, 1988; Smith, Organ and Near, 1983). According to Organ's definition, "OCB represents individual behaviour that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal rewards system, and in the aggregate promotes the efficient and effective functioning of the organization" (Organ, 1988, p.4). Theoretically, these spontaneous behaviours by individuals have played a key role in increasing the effectiveness, efficiency and positive climate in the workplace. Thus, managers and employees have been encouraged to increase their voluntary activities in organizations, as they perceived to create a healthier work environment, to lead to work outcomes, and to promote the goals of the organization as a whole (Organ, 1988; Organ & Ryan, 1995). To date, there have been no studies examining the role played by Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (Organ & Ryan, 1995) on the occurrence of Workplace Bullying. This is a gap that our study aims to address by testing whether one good consequence of citizenship behaviour is to discourage workplace bullying.

Following past studies on workplace victimization (Aquino et al., 1999; Aquino & Bommer, 2003), which have presented a victim precipitation model, frequent targets of negative and aggressive behaviours exhibit certain behavioural styles that make them appear as vulnerable to victimization. These authors reversed the process by suggesting that positive behaviour can deter victimization and found that citizenship was negatively related to victimization. Despite conceptual differences between victimization and workplace bullying (WB) persist, namely as far as the frequency of aggressive behaviours is concerned, we think reasonable to profit from the evidence drawn from these studies in order to increase our knowledge of WB. Hence, we draw the following hypothesis:

H2: The performance of organizational citizenship behaviours is negatively related to the emergence of workplace bullying

2.3 Organizational Changes and Organizational Citizenship behavior

Reorganizations may cause bullying and aggressive behaviours directly or may interfere with other variables in the emergence of bullying. The social-interaction approach to aggression also maintains that stressful events and environments indirectly affect aggression through their effect on the victim's behaviour (Felson & Tedeschi, 2003). The simple argument is that organizational changes often result in psychological contract violation which, in turn, has a detrimental impact on attitudes such as organizational commitment and result in various withdrawal behaviours such as lack of cooperation and leaving the organization, or even hostile behaviours; as change becomes more pervasive, the damage to attitudes and behaviour becomes greater (Guest et al., 2002). Additionally, employment diversification and flexible work styles may lead to serious social consequences: (1) a dominant market ethic bring about excessive rationalization, along with increasing individualization in society; (2) diverse employment and flexible work styles segment working life and destroy lifetime employment as a norm, and divide the community of workers in a workplace (Tsukamoto, 2007).

Based on the reasoning above, we want to extend our analysis to test whether organizational citizenship behaviour mediates the relationship between restructuring / downsizing and workplace bullying. Given that Aquino & Bommer (2003) found a negative relationship between organizational citizenship behaviour and victimization and suggested that employees could proactively manage their risk of being victimized by being good citizens, we want to examine the role played by organizational citizenship behaviour in workplace bullying during periods of change, restructuring and downsizing. We want to examine if the negative consequences of restructuring and downsizing in the emergence of workplace bullying are mediated by the performance of interpersonally orientated citizenship behaviours. Hence:

H3: The relationship between organizational changes and workplace bullying is mediated by organizational citizenship behaviours

2.4 The moderating effect of social and hierarchical status

We assessed the possible moderating effects of social status on the impact of OCB in the emergence of Workplace Bullying by examining two indicators of social status commonly used in research on organizational behaviour: gender and hierarchical/organizational position. As mentioned by Aquino & Bommer (2003), and as explained by the social dominance theory, people with high status are frequently judged as being more competent, intelligent and better looking than those with low status and therefore are usually treated differently and often better than low status people. Applying this reasoning to hierarchical standing, one of the above mentioned indicators of social status, high-ranking employees are treated frequently better than low-ranking employees. This implies that, in general, low-ranking employees should experience higher levels of bullying than the high-ranking ones.

Additionally to organizational position, gender may act as an organizational status indicator, according to status characteristics theory (Berger et al., 1977; Ely, 1995). Following the assumptions of this theory, people make inferences about others based on diffuse status characteristics such as gender, age or physical attractiveness that are correlated with status and perceived competence in society. Applying this theory to organizational citizenship behaviour, we argue that gender may influence inferences people make about underlying traits and, accordingly, these inferences will interfere with good citizenship' social attractiveness affecting, therefore, vulnerability to workplace bullying.

Past research has established that gender acts as a diffuse status characteristic (Hopcroft, 2002; Pugh & Wahrman, 1983; Wagner, Ford & Ford, 1986). However, women have progressively improved their position in the workplace and in the society relative to men (Berger et al., 1977) and research results suggest that the effect of gender may have changed somewhat in recent years. As such, Foschi & Lapointe (2002) found no differences in influence between women and men in her sample of Canadian university students. In the United States, however, another study conducted at about the same time found the predicted status characteristic effects of gender: women were at a disadvantage in terms of influence (Hopcroft, 2002). Because of the ambiguous evidence we want to test if the traditional view of women, who have traditionally held less powerful functions than men in organizations, still holds and if social stereotypes of women's work still reinforce the perception that women are members of a lower status group. If so, good citizenship behaviours performed by women are less likely to lead to positive inferences of underlying traits for women than men (Aquino & Bommer, 2003).

According to previous empirical evidence regarding organizational standing, gender and workplace bullying, it's worth mentioning the results found by Hoel, Cooper & Faragher (2001) and also those obtained by Salin (2003b). As such, the first authors mentioned refer few differences for the experience of self-reported workplace bullying among workers, supervisors, middle or senior managers; when the results were adjusted for the impact of gender, some discrepancies emerged between the organizational status groups: exposure to negative behaviours was more prevalent among male workers and supervisors and among female middle managers and senior managers. Women, apparently, become more vulnerable to negative behaviours the higher they progress through the organizational hierarchy, implying a connection with phenomena such as "the glass ceiling". Salin (2003b) results showed that the percentage of victims was significantly

higher among women than among men: whereas 11,6% of the female respondents reported being bullied at least occasionally, only 5% of the male respondents did so. The results also suggested that formal position seemed to be an important factor: of those classified themselves as managers, only 2% had experienced bullying during the past 12 months, whereas 9,6% of middle managers, 7,2% of experts, and 17,5% of officials/clerks had experienced bullying within the same time period.

The theoretical arguments and empirical findings, above described, suggest that organizational standing moderates the relationship between OCB and WB; similarly, gender moderates the relationship between OCB and WB. Hence, we draw the following hypothesis:

H4: the negative relationship between organizational citizenship behaviour and workplace bullying is stronger for employees who have a high, as opposed to low, hierarchical position within the organization. In a similar way, the negative relationship between organizational citizenship behaviour and perceived victimization is stronger for men than for women.

3. Methodology

Data was collected through a snow-ball process, starting mainly with personal contacts of the members of this project within the banking sector; then, Union Representatives from the main existing unions in this sector (SBSI and SNQTB) and Worker Representatives were contacted in order to broaden the sample. In this case the participants were randomly selected, out of all the registered union members at the moment. The rate of response differed significantly between the two methods of data collecting: whereas in the first case almost all the questionnaires were returned and suitable for use, in the second case the rate of response was approximately, 26%. A total of 561 valid responses have been gathered. Respondents were 54,2 % men and 45,8% women. All age groups are covered (from 22 years to 66 years, as minimum and maximum points), with a mean age of 39,42 years. As much as 92% respondents are employed in the private sector, being the rest in the public sector. Concerning the Academic Background, 57,6% of inquired people have Undergraduate Studies and 42,4% have Post Graduate Studies. Occupational Status was identified by respondents as: clerical (41,5%), technical (37,4%), supervisors (16,4%) and management (4,7%); their Organizational Status was identified as: workers (65,9), supervisors (26,4%), middle management (6,6%) and top management (1,1%).

A measure for the main variables under analysis was obtained from employees self-reports to a questionnaire: Workplace bullying was measured by using two different and complementary strategies. First, respondents were asked how often they have experienced a set of 38 negative and potentially harassing acts within the past 12 months¹, on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (daily). Secondly, respondents were introduced to a definition of bullying, based on prior research (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Einarsen et al, 2003), immediately followed by the question: "using the above definition, please state whether you have been bullied at work over the last 12 months", accompanied by a series

¹ the period was extended in order to avoid seasonal variations due to the holiday period because the questionnaire was launched in the beginning of summer

of answer alternatives (five) with regard to the frequency of experience. For those considering themselves bullied there were follow-up questions regarding the perpetrator(s), the duration of bullying, previous and indirect experience (witnessing) of bullying, amongst others.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviour was measured by means of a 20-item scale adapted from Vigoda-Gadot (2006). Sample items include: "Volunteered for things that were not required", "Made innovative suggestions to improve one's work", "This employee takes steps to prevent problems with others workers" and "This employee consumes a lot of time complaining about trivial matters (reverse coded)". Responses were rated on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

Reorganizations were measured through an adaptation of the Baron & Neuman (1998) scale, measuring "Strategic Organizational Changes" (downsizings, changes in management, restructuring, etc.), "Organizational efficiency measures" (technological changes, increased diversity in work force, etc.) and "Social Changes" (increased use of part-time workers, pay cuts or pay freezes, job sharing, etc.). Responses were rated on a Likert type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 4 (always).

Gender was reported by employees and coded as "0" for males and "1" for females.

Organizational Standing was self-reported by respondents and then recoded into a categorical variable with the following categories: "1" = workers; "2" = supervisors; "3" = Management; this variable was dummy coded for analysis purposes.

4. Results

As a preliminary step to multiple regression analysis, bivariate correlations were calculated between the dependent variable Workplace Bullying (WB) and the independent variables of interest for the purpose of this paper. Coefficient values showed that Reorganizations (RG) correlate significantly and positively with workplace bullying (bivariate correlation = 0,402**) and that, as hypothesized, Organizational Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) correlates negatively with the perception of being the target of bullying behaviours. (Bivariate Correlation=-0,343**).

Given the statistically significant correlation coefficients, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was performed to test Hypothesis 1 – 4. To test the mediator effect of organizational citizenship behaviour over organizational changes, mentioned in Hypothesis 3, the steps suggested by Baron & Kenny (1986) were performed. Then, in order to examine the moderator effect referred to in Hypothesis 4, data were centered in the analysis using the deviation score approach to reduce multicollinearity among the interaction term and their individual components (Aiken & West, 1991). Hence, the following steps were performed and the R2 change calculated at each step as well as the unstandardized beta weights across the three regression stages.

In Step 1, we controlled for several demographic variables that may be related to the perception of the behaviours as bullying, but that are not of direct interest for the purposes of the current analysis. After performing this step, Gender, Age and Academic Background showed a statistically significant relationship with workplace bullying. The unstandardized Beta coefficient of gender revealed that men are more at risk of being bullied in 0,113 relative to women, in average terms. Also, the results showed that the more qualified individuals were more at risk of being bullied relative to undergraduate employees, as the

unstandardized beta coefficient revealed that this association was only statistically significant for the higher levels of Academic Background.

In Step2, besides keeping the relevant variables of the previous stage, we added work environment and socio-economic variables to examine the main effects of direct interest. Despite the fact that our primary interest here is to examine the direct association between workplace bullying and organizational changes and between workplace bullying and organizational citizenship behaviour, all the variables from the global data collection were included in the model because of the exploratory nature of the study underlying this paper. The results showed a statistically significant association, on one hand, between workplace bullying and organizational changes ($B=0,317^{***}$) and, on the other hand, between workplace bullying and organizational citizenship behaviour ($B= - 0,115^{***}$). The direction of the effects leads us to confirm Hypothesis 1 and 2 and, thus, the direct association between the variables under analysis.

In Step3, we test for the mediator effect of OCB over organizational changes in the emergence of workplace bullying. The results showed a partial mediation effect of 1,886, according to Sobel (1982), statistically significant for $p < 0,07$, as the regression coefficient of organizational changes decreases with the inclusion of the mediator variable in the model (the unstandardized B coefficient decreases from 0,317 to 0,307). This means that the performance of citizenship behaviours mediates the relationship between organizational changes and workplace bullying. Then, taking in account the negative direct association found between organizational citizenship behaviours and workplace bullying and that OCB mediates the relationship between workplace bullying and organizational changes, we can assert that, by reversing the process, the performance of citizenship behaviours contributes to directly decrease workplace bullying (WB) and also to mitigate the negative impact of organizational changes over bullying behaviours.

As long as the interaction term of organizational status and OCB is concerned, we conclude for the existence of a statistically significant effect. We explored the pattern of this interaction using the procedures recommended by Aiken & West (1991). Separate regressions by hierarchical standing group showed that the negative direct relationship between OCB and WB, revealed in Step2, was only statistically significant for workers ($B= - 0,20$, $p < 0,01$). As such, workers would be the ones who most benefit from the performance of citizenship behaviours. Subsequently, we performed a similar process to test the moderator role of gender. Thus, we conducted separate regressions for men and women and we found no moderator role for gender, as the interaction term of gender and OCB was not statistically significant. According to these results, we failed to confirm the propositions asserted in Hypothesis 4 because the organizational position by organizational citizenship interaction term was stronger for workers contrary to hypothesized and the gender by organizational citizenship interaction term was not statistically significant ($B= 0,01$, n.s.).

From ANOVA analysis results, the final model fit was considered significant with 42,6% of the total variability of the dependent variable explained by all the independent variables included. The adjusted R^2 value of 0,396 indicates that more than one third of the total variability in the dependent variable is explained by all the independent variables included in the regression model. The introduction of OCB as a mediator variable and of hierarchical standing as a moderator variable lead to an R^2 change of 0,021, which is statistically significant at a $p < 0,005$.

5. Discussion of Results

Starting with the results regarding demographic variables obtained in the regression analysis performed, we found that men are more at risk of being bullied compared to women, namely the most qualified individuals. These findings can be explained by the employment structure of the financial sector, where there is a higher proportion of men compared to women, namely in higher upper levels of the hierarchy, and also by the flattering of organizational structures associated with the recent restructuring and downsizing trends faced by this sector in Portugal. Additionally, these results go in line with the results of the V European Working Conditions Survey, which indicated that in Portugal men are more at risk of being bullied compared to women (7% versus 5%). The previous research on differential exposure linked to gender is mixed. Bowling & Behr's (2006) meta-analysis found a weak yet significant association between gender and exposure to workplace aggression, with men being more likely to be victimized. Zapf et al., (2011) found that differences in rates were attributable to gender proportionality in the samples studied, concluding for no systematic differences in rates of prevalence. Mayhew & Chapelli (2007) reporting on International Labour Organization data across a number of countries noted that women were more likely to be victimized but attributed this tendency to women's over-representation in jobs that are at high risk for all manner of aggression and violence, not just bullying. So it may be less being a woman or man and more where a person is that will predict his or her exposure (O'Connell, Calvert & Watson, 2007).

Regarding work environment variables, this study has reinforced the potential association previously found between organizational changes (namely restructuring and downsizing, changes in management, pay-cuts or pay-freezes, social changes and changes in work conditions) and workplace bullying, as a positive relationship was found between these two variables (Baron & Neuman, 1996, 1998; Skogstad, Wold & Einarsen, 2006). Also, it opens up new directions to the workplace bullying research by establishing a negative connection between organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) and workplace bullying (WB). Additionally, a partial mediator role was found on OCB over the negative impact of organizational changes in the emergence of Workplace bullying. Finally, we found that the relationship between OCB and WB was moderated by hierarchical position; no moderator role was found for gender.

According to Einarsen et al. (2003), workplace bullying is a dynamic process or escalated conflict involving interaction between two parties (victim(s) and perpetrator(s)), in which the victim is not a mere passive recipient but, rather, an active agent which can influence the process through the way he/she reacts to the bullying behaviour. Given the results found in this study, we suggest that targets of workplace bullying may indirectly use organizational citizenship behaviours instrumentally to defend themselves from bullying behaviours. In the same line of reasoning, Aquino & Bommer (2003), who found a direct negative relationship between citizenship and victimization, suggested that employees can proactively manage their risk of being victimized by being good citizens. Also, in a study conducted by Zapf & Gross (2001), results showed that successful victims of workplace bullying often used conflict avoidance strategies, avoiding not only retaliating negative behaviours but also frequenting absenteeism from work. Hence, as bullying behaviours may have an instrumental nature, according to some authors, acting as a means to an end (Lawrence, 2001), the same analogy may be applied to OCB, in a measure that it allows employees to gain social power. As such, we may conclude that targets of workplace

bullying may choose how to behave during the process and accordingly are able (at least in a certain degree) to have some control over the situation. Hence, citizenship behaviours may be used to acquire power by victims of bullying and help them in the process of workplace bullying. Researchers have traditionally viewed citizenship as prosocial (Organ, 1988), but there is no reason to assume that such behaviour is entirely selfless. For example, citizenship can be used purely for impression management purposes or for advancing one's interests through ingratiation or self-promotion (Bolino, 1999).

The concept of power and power differences are crucial points in the several definitions of workplace bullying presented so far in this research (Einarsen & Skogstad, 1996; Vartia, 1996), yet no bullying research as sought to explain the role of power in bullying. On one hand, a perceived power imbalance is important when defining bullying, since a perceived inability to defend oneself successfully is seen as an important element in the definition of workplace bullying; by the other hand, power is also important in establishing what is perceived as bullying at a given time in a given context. Power is understood in relative terms, expressed as an imbalance of power between the parties, where the position of the target is identified with a deficit vis-à-vis the perpetrator. As such, the power imbalance may reflect formal power relationships or may refer to perceptions of powerlessness resulting from the bullying process itself due to conflict escalation, leaving one of the parties' increasingly defenseless (Leymann, 1996; Hoel & Salin, 2003). By contrast, where bullying is predominantly identified with managerial behaviour, the focus is on the abuse of power, arising from the power structure and associated with control over rewards and punishments (Aquino, 2000). Brodsky (1976) also perceives bullies as manipulating their colleagues or staff in order to achieve power or privilege (either formally by the gaining of reward and promotion, or informally by the power obtained from generating terror among co-workers), pointing out that some positions of power include the remit to inflict actions on others which could be perceived as aggressive.

At this point, a definition of power should be presented in order to further advance and establish a bridge between the power elements associated with workplace bullying and also acquired through the practice of citizenship behaviours. Thus, for the purposes of this article Power is defined as the "ability to influence others and maintain control over one's own fat". Underlying this definition is a key element: a dependence relationship between the two parties. This presumes the existence of resources, or bases of power, which give its owner the capacity to influence the others behaviour. French & Raven (1957) distinguishes the following bases of power: legitimate power, reward power, coercive power, referent power and expert power, which are interrelated.

Power manifests itself in a relational manner; one cannot meaningfully say that a particular social actor has power without also specifying the other parties to the social relationship. Legitimate power is associated with the formal status in an organization. Referent power is connected with being liked which, most probably is acquired by good citizens deriving from social esteem enhance (Bolino, 1999). Expert power may be acquired by good citizens because the performance of good citizenship behaviours entitled its owner with expertise in the sense that he is able to proactively manage the dynamics behind bullying through the performance of citizenship behaviours and potentially avoid the escalating of conflict.

In this study we hypothesized that the negative relationship between citizenship and bullying behaviours would be greater for people with high status employees as opposed to low rank employees. Despite we failed to verify this hypothesis, as the moderator role of

hierarchical status was only significant for workers, a interaction effect emerged from the data which may leave us to conclude that power could be acquired through the practice of good citizenship behaviours. The failure to acquire legitimate power by high rank employees may be compensated by coercive and reward power, given that high rank employees are in a better position to retaliate bullying behaviours compared to low rank employees and to defend themselves also due to reward power. On the other hand, workers can acquire referent power, which is connected with being liked and most probably is acquired by good citizens deriving from social esteem enhance (Bolino,1999). Expert power may also be acquired by good citizens because the performance of good citizenship behaviours entitled its owner with expertise in the sense that he is able to proactively manage the dynamics behind bullying trough the performance of citizenship behaviours and potentially avoid the escalating of conflict.

Turning our attention to the interaction between gender and organizational citizenship behaviour, we asserted above that we came to the conclusion in this study that gender does not act as a moderator between organizational citizenship behavior and workplace bullying. These results go in line with Aquino & Bommer (2003) who also found that the interaction term between gender and organizational citizenship was not significant. One interpretation of the null results is that they may reflect a broader societal change in the social status of women relative to men. Gender is an important aspect of social power (Carli, 1999). As we entered the twenty-first century, we see that more and more women are entering work organizations and that many women are the primary breadwinners for the family unit. Further, many appear to be shattering the glass ceiling and making it to the very top, taking over high profile positions with organizations of all types. Evidence also exists to suggest that gender is declining as a divisive factor within work and organizational life. For many women, as well as men, their work is a major part of their lives; women, as well as men, hold substantial positions of power (Halford & Leonard, 2001). As such, social power of women may have increased compared to men contributing to narrow the perceived status differential between women and men. Another plausible explanation for the null results of gender is that social condition within the organizational sector we studied (banking sector) weakened the association between gender and perceptions of low status. In fact, women fill the vast majority of jobs with commercial banking and sales for the workforce is for flexible and multi-skilled workers.

6. Conclusions

The most important conclusion of this paper is that, given the association found between citizenship behaviours and workplace bullying and also regarding the mediator role of OCB, is that employees are not completely powerless to defend themselves against bullying. Rather, they can behave proactively and benefit from using citizenship behaviours as a self-protective strategy. The main and moderating effects of organizational standing show that this socially constructed identity continues to influence how employees experience and react to their work environments. Then, the practical implications of this are clear and point to the need to make efforts both at the organizational and the individual level toward reducing power differentials among employees, through greater power sharing and workplace empowerment.

Workplace bullying has been considered by the European Risk Observatory an emergent psychosocial risk related to health and safety at work and accordingly should be managed in a proactive way to ensure employees a safe and secure work environment. In order to reach this goal, at the organizational level, strategies should be drawn to influence attitudes towards bullying and inappropriate behavior at work, to develop an organizational culture where there is no room for bullying and to introduce policies and procedures for prevention. Researchers and practitioners have recommended the introduction of organizational anti-bullying policies and specific guidelines for prevention and for handling complaints and incidents of bullying as well as risk assessment programs. At the individual level, carrying out training of all employees in bullying and conflict management strategies has also been recommended. Additionally social support, psychological counselling and on-the-job training should be provided to targets of workplace bullying.

7. Main references

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